

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claim 1. (currently amended)      A method to additionally test a patient's specimen contained in an original sample container using an analyzer after tests on a first aliquot portion taken from the patient's specimen are completed, the method comprising the steps of:

    providing bar code indicia on the original sample container to indicate a predetermined period of storage time;

    extracting a first aliquot portion of the patient's specimen from the original sample container;

    providing an aliquot storage vessel;

    extracting a second aliquot portion of the patient's specimen from the original sample container and retaining said second aliquot portion in said aliquot storage vessel;

    operating the analyzer to perform tests on the first aliquot portion;

    storing said aliquot storage vessel containing the second aliquot portion within a storage compartment within said analyzer for said predetermined period of storage time ~~containing the second aliquot portion~~; and,

    additionally testing the second aliquot specimen portion during said predetermined period of time.

Claim 2. (original)      The method of claim 1 wherein the storage compartment comprises environmentally controlled conditions.

Claim 3. (canceled)

Claim 4. (original)      The method of claim 1 where the aliquot storage vessel is an aliquot strip having a number of open aliquot wells therein.

Claim 5. (previously presented)      The method of claim 1 wherein the aliquot storage vessel to be stored is covered with layer of protective film.

Claim 6. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising disposing of said second aliquot portion of the patient's specimen after said period of time is expired.

Claim 7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein marking the sample container to indicate a period of time comprises providing a bar coded indicia on said sample container containing information that can be used to establish the period of time that the second sample aliquot is retained in the storage compartment after tests on the first sample aliquot are completed.

Claim 8. (previously presented) A method to additionally test a patient's specimen contained in an original sample container using an analyzer after tests on a first aliquot portion taken from the patient's specimen are completed, the method comprising the steps of:

- providing bar code indicia on the original sample container to indicate the tests to be completed on the patient's sample;

- extracting a first aliquot portion of the patient's specimen from the original sample container;

- providing an aliquot storage vessel;

- extracting a second aliquot portion of the patient's specimen from the original sample container and retaining said second aliquot portion in said aliquot storage vessel;

- operating the analyzer to perform said tests on the first aliquot portion;

- using the identity of said tests to determine a storage period of time for said second aliquot portion;

- storing said aliquot storage vessel containing the second aliquot portion for said storage period of time within an environmentally controlled storage compartment within said analyzer; and,

- additionally testing the second aliquot specimen portion during said storage period of time.

Claim 9. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein tests for multiple analytes are to be performed on the specimen, and wherein the bar code indicia on the original sample container indicate a period of time associated with each of the multiple analytes, the method further comprising:

    additionally testing the second aliquot portion for a given analyte only during a time period before the period of time associated with the given analyte passes.

Claim 10. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein tests for multiple analytes are to be performed on the specimen, and wherein the bar code indicia on the original sample container indicate a period of time associated with each of the multiple analytes, the method further comprising:

    additionally testing the second aliquot portion for a given analyte during a time period after the period of time associated with the given analyte passes; and,

    displaying an alert signal or message indicating that the additional test results were obtained on a specimen retained within the storage for period of time longer than the period of time associated with the given analyte.

Claim 11. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the bar code indicia identifies the tests to be performed upon a patient's specimen, whether or not the second aliquot portion is to be retained in storage, and if so, the period of storage time the second aliquot portion is to be retained in storage.